

*Main Office
400 North Tampa Street, Suite 3200
Tampa, Florida 33602
813/274-6000
813/274-6358 (Fax)*



*Post Office Box 600
200 West Forsyth Street, Room 700
Jacksonville, Florida 32201
904/232-2682
904/232-2620 (Fax)*

*2110 First Street, Suite 3-137
Fort Myers, Florida 33901
941/461-2200
941/461-2219 (fax)*

*U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
Middle District of Florida*

*80 North Hughey Avenue, Room 201
Orlando, Florida 32801
407/648-7500
407/648/7643 (Fax)*

Reply to: Orlando, FL

April 17, 2002

3 YEARS PROBATION FOR EMBEZZLER

Orlando, Florida – On April 17, 2002, United States District Court Judge G. Kendall Sharp sentenced Vanessa E. Hatcher of Daytona Beach to three years' probation and ordered her to pay restitution of \$3,050.00 to the Social Security Administration, plus pay a special assessment of \$100. Hatcher was charged with embezzling \$5,223 from the Social Security Administration and with lying to federal investigators when questioned about the embezzlement. Hatcher pled guilty on January 29, 2002.

Evidence presented to the Court demonstrated that Hatcher was employed at the Social Security Administration office in Holly Hill, Florida, as a Title XVI Claims Representative. In February and March 2001, she accessed the Social Security Administration computer system from her office desk and re-directed two benefit checks into her personal bank account.

The Social Security Administration computer system is designed to detect such transfers of money into employee accounts, and investigators questioned Hatcher about a transfer of \$2,163 into her account in March 2001. She said it was a mistake caused by entering the wrong account numbers into the system. Hatcher had already sent an anonymous check for \$2,163 to the Social Security office in Orlando, apparently in an effort to remedy her wrongdoing. When asked by investigators whether she had transferred any

other benefit money into her personal account she denied that she had done so. Hatcher's bank account records were subpoenaed by the Federal Grand Jury in Orlando, and they disclosed that in February 2001, a Social Security benefit check for \$3,050 was direct-deposited into her account. When confronted with this information Hatcher admitted that she had re-directed the deposit into her account.

United States Attorney Paul I. Perez thanked the Social Security Administration agents who uncovered the embezzlement and stated, "We will continue to aggressively prosecute those employees who steal from the United States government and betray the trust we have placed in them."

The case was investigated by Special Agents of the Social Security Administration Office of Inspector General. The case was prosecuted by Bruce S. Ambrose, Assistant United States Attorney in the Orlando Division of the Office of the United States Attorney, Middle District of Florida.

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